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CENTENNIAL ORATION

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE CITIZENS OF WOODSTOCK, VT., AND VICINITY,

ON THE

Fourth of July, 1876.

BY

CHARLES P. MARSH.

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ORATION.

Mr. President, and Fellow Citizens:

It needed not a resolution of Congress, nor the recommendation of the President of the nation, as a stimulant to the people of the United States to celebrate in a becoming manner, this, the centennial birth-day of American Independence. Never before, since the birth-day of the Republic, have so many cannon sent forth their peals of rejoicing, and the bells from so many towers rang forth their merry notes of welcome, as ushered in the sunrise of this natal day of American freedom.

It is fit and proper that it should be thus. It is but the fulfillment of the elder Adams' prediction; for one hundred years ago this day, writing from Philadelphia, he says, "Let the day henceforth be celebrated with guns and bells — with bonfires and illuminations, from this time forward forever." This was the outburst of the enthusiasm consequent on the announcement, that the Declaration of Independence had been adopted and signed by the representatives of the united colonies in general congress assembled.

This Declaration, which made us a free people and an Independent Nation, was everywhere hailed then throughout the thirteen States, which had hitherto been but colonies of a foreign power, with salvos of artillery and general rejoicing by the people. But the end was not yet. They were a nation on paper, and by profes-

sion — a nation *de jure*. But the arbitrament of battle was before them, and long years of struggle, of privation, of deadly encounter, of hardships, almost without a parallel, of disease and death, lay in their path of progress; and how and when the end was to be, God only knew. But to that great Being they clung, throughout all their tribulations and trials, with unparalleled Christian confidence and the most child-like faith and submission.

It is not for me, to-day, to trace the battles and the sieges, the victories and the defeats, the days of elation, and the many days almost bordering upon despair which fell to the lot of our Revolutionary fathers in that eight years' heroic struggle with the most powerful military nation in the world. They are well known to us all, and from our early childhood the historian has almost burned them into our memory. Nor need I recount the many causes which occasioned sore disaffection on the part of the colonists with the government of Great Britain and led to the separation. Nor is it for me to say, that the hand of the Almighty was in it all; that has already been said by the historian, and I think it not sacrilege to add, that the great national events of the first century of the Republic can but confirm in all meditative christian minds the views of the Historiographer.

Our fathers were well fitted for hardships; they were schooled in the school of adversity; puritans in religious faith, and primitive in their views of government, they could have no fellowship or kindly feeling towards any religion that was not purely Theocratic, nor any government of the state in the slightest degree tinged with kingly prerogative. They were in a large degree possessed of the more homely virtues, but they were unskilled in State-Craft. I speak now of the puritan emigrants of 1620 and their long line of descendants, who

have so indelibly stamped their character upon the government, and upon the eleemosynary institutions, both public and private, from the Bay of Massachusetts to the Golden Gate of the Pacific.

They had but slight respect for the mere forms and ceremonies of political institutions or religious creeds, but they were profoundly versed in that faith, which is "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." Theirs was a religion predicated upon a profound conviction of the reasoning faculties, and an unwavering faith in Divine realities.

Almost simultaneously with the erection of the Altar, where they could pour forth their hearts to the Deity, whom they venerated and loved, they erected the school house where their children could receive instruction, such as should fit them to become good citizens, and qualify them for the responsible duties of administering in due time the political affairs of the state.

In the same year, 1620, there was landed upon the coast of Virginia another class of emigrants from Europe, of a different type of civilization in many respects. They were possessed of many of the virtues of the Puritans, but their associations had been more of a patrician character. They had more respect for monarchy than the Puritans, more given to pleasure; esteeming themselves more a governing class, regarding personal labor as something derogatory to a gentleman, and holding to the idea that capital and labor were distinct properties, and that true prosperity consisted in capital owning its own laborers, and that chattel labor was for the best interests of the state. In a word, that Negro Slavery should be the corner stone of the Government.

Thus these two forms of civilization, starting in the same year on this Western continent, proceeded forth in

their mission of colonization. For two centuries nearly, they labored together almost hand in hand. Together they leveled the primeval forest; they planted, and they harvested. In the early colonial wars they went forth together, and fought the common enemy. They sympathized in each other's misfortunes, and rejoiced in each other's prosperity; made common cause when Great Britain annoyed and harrassed them by inconsiderate and unfriendly laws, and sent to each other words of encouragement and cheer when unfriendly foreign legislation sought, in any way, to cripple or destroy the enterprise or the industry of any one of the several colonies. In this way they went through the War of the Revolution; hailed alike the declaration of American Independence, and together rallied around the flag of their country, and bore it aloft in triumph at the close of the eight years' controversy.

After the War of Independence, in the year 1787, delegates from all the States assembled at Philadelphia, to do away with the articles of confederation, and to adopt a constitution that should meet the requirements of the country, and at the same time receive the cordial sanction of all the States.

No abler body of men have ever assembled in this country as a deliberative body, than were the delegates who met at Philadelphia in the month of May, 1787, to adopt a Federal Constitution. At its head, and the president of the convention, was GEORGE WASHINGTON; among the members of that body, in which all the States were represented, except Rhode Island, was John Langdon of New Hampshire, Elbridge Gerry and Rufus King of Massachusetts, Roger Sherman and Oliver Ellsworth of Connecticut, Alexander Hamilton of New York, Benjamin Franklin and Gouverneur Morris of Pennsylvania,

Patrick Henry and James Madison of Virginia, and Charles Pinckney of South Carolina.

After the adoption of the Constitution, and the inauguration under it of President Washington, on the 30th of April, 1789, the government assumed form and shape, and our country's career of prosperity began..

It was a most noble spectacle. The world had never before seen its like. A free and intelligent people choosing their own chief magistrate by a free ballot cast by their own hands; a free people making their own laws, through the representatives of their own choosing; such a spectacle seemed hardly a possibility. The crowned heads of Europe looked upon it at first with derision, and then with dismay. Such a government, they reasoned, if a success, would be a standing and perpetual menace to every Monarchy of the old world.

Every Statesman of any note in all Europe prophesied the early and speedy downfall of the infant Republic. The ardent wish for it was, in most cases, the instigator of the prophesy. And still the Republic lived and prospered. The people were united and happy; every industry was prosperous; our ships carrying at their mast heads the ensign of the Union, were fast multiplying in every foreign port; our commerce was increasing; our mercantile interest was advancing; emigration of the working people from several of the European nations was fast pouring in upon us; our population was rapidly on the increase, and new States were settling and being added to the original thirteen. The legislatures of the several States, where human slavery had no existence, fully recognizing the fact that "intelligence was the life of liberty," so legislated every year as to bring the blessings and the benefits of a free education to the children of every hearthstone in the land.

European prophesy was felt by all to be a failure. The new Republic, instead of falling to pieces and crumbling to decay, was waxing more vigorous, increasing every year in strength and resources, and in both physical and moral power and influence was fast excelling many of the monarchial powers of the Eastern continent.

The policy of Washington's administration, in its foreign diplomacy, was to cultivate peace with all nations, and to enter into entangling alliances with none of them. The administrations of Adams and Jefferson, which next succeeded, endeavored to rigidly pursue the same policy, as being in the line of safe precedent. The administrations of James Madison which followed that of Jefferson was attended with many embarrassments. All Europe, almost, was at war. The doors of the "Temple of Janus" were flung wide open, and every portion of the continent resounded for years with the continuous tramp of armed men. Napoleon was in the zenith of his power—with his victorious armies he marched through Europe and toppled over thrones and dynasties as though they were but playthings in his path of progress. Those great nations never before had such a "wild waking up" as they were now receiving from the conquering legions of this plebeian general. England, with the other nations around her, became alarmed, and in recruiting her wasted armies resorted to measures harrassing to our commerce and humiliating to us as a nation. She claimed the right to search our vessels and impress by force into her own national service such seamen of English descent as she claimed had not been naturalized, or were not furnished with proper certificates of protection. And it was claimed on the part of our government that England's necessities oft times led them, while engaged in this, as was claimed,

illegal search, to the perpetration of the greatest atrocities and outrages upon native born, as well as naturalized American citizens. A majority of the people of this nation became indignant at repeated abuses of this character. The war spirit is contagious in its very nature. Every vessel landing on our shores from Europe brought vivid accounts of battles and sieges, of the clangor of hostile forces, the thundering of cannon and of victories won. There was a strong conservative element in the nation, mainly in New England, which vainly endeavored to stem the war-tide, and they had an able and influential delegation in Congress to represent them, and to resist, if possible, the rising war spirit of the country; but they were overborne and vanquished, mainly by reason of the superior statesmanship, and wonderfully magic eloquence of Henry Clay. Mr. Clay's brilliant speeches gained an audience everywhere throughout the country, and his burning eloquence rang like the trumpet notes of victory in every section of the nation. Says Mr. Clay, in one of his impassioned utterances on the subject of right of search and impressment, "If Great Britain desires a mark by which she can know her own subjects, let her give them an earmark. The colors that float from the mast head should be the credentials of our seamen." The war furor could not be appeased, and on the 18th of June, 1812, the United States declared war against Great Britain. In the light of subsequent events it is apparent now, and for a long time has been, that that war had better been avoided. It accomplished but little in the way of national results, while in the loss of life and in the expenditure of money it was no exception to all wars. But the nation was young and vigorous; we had been at profound peace for thirty years. Our mother country, we thought, had insulted us, and to use a frontier expression,

we were almost "spoiling for a fight." As a nation, we were like a spunky boy of sixteen, very much as we were when Burke spoke of us while we were yet colonists, "A nation still in the gristle and not yet hardened into the bone of manhood," but we were brave beyond a question, and we were not unwilling to manifest it to the world.

The war being declared, the nation bore itself manfully through the struggle. It raised all the soldiers and sailors needed. It organized armies and fleets. It achieved most signal and satisfactory successes by sea and by land, while it occasionally sustained reverses of no slight character, such as are ever incident to war; and at the end of two and a half years from the time of the commencement of hostilities, an honorable treaty of peace was gladly signed by the Commissioners of both nations.

No nation ever welcomed with more intense joy the cessation of hostilities than did the United States. There had been really no principle involved in the contest, and could the matter in dispute have been left out to the arbitrament of some neutral nation, the whole controversy between the two countries could have been speedily settled without the firing of a gun. But that mode of settling national controversies was not then in favor, as it is hoped it soon may be, for all time to come.

The war of 1812, as it is called, was, however, of great benefit to the nation in one respect, aside from displaying the bravery and warlike qualities of our people, in this, that the closing of our ports of entry, during hostilities, to all foreign importations, both of necessaries and of luxuries, had brought our countrymen to a realizing sense of the importance of a more diversified industry. Our people had hitherto been almost solely an agricultural people. With but few exceptions the manufacturing and the mechanic arts had been neglected, and to such an extent,

that we were even dependent upon foreign nations, during the war, for tent blankets necessary for the comfort of our soldiers. Our cloths, except those of a coarse fabric for common wear, were the product of foreign looms. For our edge tools we were dependent upon Birmingham and Sheffield; while the artisans of France and Germany furnished everything of a fancy nature, within the means of our men and women to procure. Besides this, the close of the war found our National indebtedness fearfully increased, and individual indebtedness was bearing down upon our people with a heavy weight, and taxes and interest were eating up all our substance. Such a condition of things called for the exercise of the wisest statesmanship. We had then no Lowells, no Manchesters, no Holyokes. The power loom had not then been invented, our unexampled water privileges were unimproved, except here and there a rude saw mill, or still ruder carding mill, where our coarse wool was carded into rolls, when some thrifty house-wife found time to run her hand spinning wheel.

The government itself was forced to exercise the most niggardly economy in order to defray the most parsimonious running expenses, and pay the interest on the public debt; while almost all the money the people could command, went to pay for the foreign importation of necessaries which they were unable to procure at home. In this condition of things, the result of a sound political economy seemed to indicate, that the first step, in the way of legislation for national and individual relief, would be to impose such a tax upon foreign importations as should induce our citizens, such as had capital at their command, to expend it in the erection of mills and manufactories by the side of our numerous waterfalls, in order to build up a more diversified industry, and manufacture many of the

articles and goods necessary for our home consumption. But this result was not arrived at in Congress until after long debate. It finally resulted in the enactment of a law denominated the tariff of 1816. This law worked so well, that eight years after, in 1824, the tariff on imports was largely increased, and the beneficial results of such legislation began to speedily develop themselves. Many of my hearers can remember well how hope revived, after the enactment of the tariff law of 1824; up to that time the failures and reverses in the manufacturing industry of the country had demonstrated to the entire satisfaction of the American people that without the aid of the government we were helpless as against foreign importations. England, with her Birminghams, her Manchesters and her Sheffields, could flood us with her manufactured products, and drain our country of all her money, the life blood of a nation's energy and prosperity. We could contend with her satisfactorily enough on the field of battle; Saratoga and Yorktown, Lake Erie and New Orleans and many other fields of fierce conflict, were historic witnesses for us in that behalf. But in the field of peaceful industry, we were confessedly no match for her. The protecting arm of government became indispensable for the safety of the labor of the country, and to guard and protect it against a relentless, wealthy, foreign competition.

Without adequate protection, the inequality was too much for us, but when that protection was vouchsafed, capital at once entered the field, and from that time, with the American people, dates the age of industry, the age of improvements, the age of enterprise in industrial pursuits, the age of such a prosperity as the world has never witnessed in the history of any other nation.

At no time in the history of this country was there such

universal prosperity in every section of it as was witnessed for the ten years next following the enactment of the tariff of 1824. The people, everywhere within our borders were amply employed,with most remunerative wages; our farms were everywhere improved and increasing in value; manufacturing villages multiplied; the busy hum of industry answered back the echoes of every waterfall; towns sprang up as if by magic; our cities were enlarged and beautified; our lakes and large rivers teeming with a busy commerce; our sails whitening every foreign as well as domestic port; our foreign commerce, both in exports and in imports, increasing to an extent beyond the wildest imagination of our statesmen; the great public debt of the nation extinguished; and the private indebtedness of our people reduced to a minimum in proportion to our population, never before known. Such were the results, flowing from laws enacted by the American Congress for the protection of American Industry, and I appeal to every intelligent man before me and to the history of our common country for the entire truth of these statements.

Successful as we now were, in the field of peaceful industry, beholden to no nation for any of the necessaries, and I was about to say, for any of the luxuries of life even, the United States were at last a truly free and independent nation. The war of the Revolution freed them from a political thraldom, while years of peace in the field, of successful and protected industry, had established her manufacturing and mechanical pursuits on a firm foundation, and beyond the reach of foreign or unfriendly competition.

From 1815 to 1846 our country was in a state of profound peace with all the world. For thirty-one years, war, with its barbarities and its vices, came not to vex us,

and the only foes we had, if any, were those of our own household. It was a long era of national peace and prosperity. The country had increased in wealth and population beyond the sanguine predictions of our most devoted partisans. The New England States had become one vast hive of industry. The inventive power of her people had set in motion every variety of labor saving machinery, and the field, the mill, and the shop of the machinist, furnished ample as well as remunerative employment to all classes of her citizens. The middle states of the Union were equally devoted to agriculture, mining and the pursuits of commerce. The great West, where is now the seat of empire, was then but the mere outposts, as it were, of our rapidly advancing civilization. While the South, by reason of the increased value imparted to the cotton crop through the invention of the cotton gin, by Eli Whitney of Connecticut, became wholly engrossed in the cultivation of cotton and the raising of negro slaves. Her cotton supplied the markets of the world, and its increased consumption everywhere was an inducement for the planters to seek to enlarge, if possible, the area of its production. This occasioned an increased demand for slave labor, and the slave population of the country was largely on the increase. For many years this great national shame attracted but little attention ; it was silently suffered to increase, and it experienced the protection of national legislation.

The first overt act for its extension, and which called forth some opposition from the non-slaveholding States, was on the occasion of the admission of Missouri to the Union in 1820. This was effected through what was known as the " Missouri compromise," whereby it was solemnly enacted, that in all the territory ceded to us by France, lying north of 36 degrees and 30 minutes, " slavery

shall be and is hereby forever prohibited." This was regarded then by all parties as forever establishing by solemn legislation the legal bounds of slavery on the north.

In 1843, and for a little time previous thereto, the subject of the annexation of Texas, formerly a portion of the republic of Mexico, but which a few years before, by a revolt gotten up by adventurous Americans who had migrated thither, claimed to be independent of Mexico, was agitated through the country. It soon became the favorite hobby of the slave power. The free North feebly remonstrated, but the whole country was drunk with prosperity, and really cared but little about it. The presidential election of 1844 in a measure turned upon this question, especially in the Southern States, and notwithstanding HENRY CLAY was the presidential candidate of the whig party, he was defeated, and a Southern man in the person of James K. Polk of Tennessee, was elected. In the year following, in the month of June, 1845, the annexation of Texas was effected, and thus a slaveholding country, as large as New England, was made part and parcel of the American Union.

This bold feat of the slave power led to a war with Mexico, as was plainly predicted by many that it would. On the 11th of May, 1846, Congress enacted that, "by the act of the republic of Mexico a state of war exists between that government and the United States."

It is seldom that so flagrant a lie ever finds a lodgment in a legislative enactment; but it met the approval of the party majority then in the ascendant in the country and received the sanction of President Polk. The war was of but short duration, and a treaty of peace was concluded between the two governments in the month of February, 1848.

It is difficult at this day to read or even to think of that

war but with feelings of deep humiliation and profound mortification. The United States were then a powerful, strong, defiant nation. Mexico, on the other hand, was weak, enfeebled by internal violence, and distracted by domestic dissension. It was a war, in which, as a nation, we could neither win honor, glory or renown. However much individual valor might display itself, and call forth the huzzas of the multitude, it was nevertheless a war, wherein defeat, in even a single conflict, would be a disgrace, and victory could win for us no encomiums. It was a war, waged simply and solely in the interest of the partisans of human slavery. The territory of Mexico was all free territory. It was polluted nowhere by the footsteps of servitude. That Republic, hardly more than half civilized, as civilization is defined by the most enlightened nations, had, notwithstanding, many years previous thereto, abolished slavery within all her borders; and whenever the poor, panting fleeing slave from the bloodhounds and lash of his master, sought protection upon the soil of Mexico, he was met there by no infamous fugitive slave law to seize him and brutally return him to bondage and perhaps to death. And hence the war. Some future historian will not fail to strip the veil of hypocritical pretence from this American outrage upon poor, enfeebled, distracted Mexico, and let in the sunlight of God's justice upon that legislation of infamy and national shame.

The poor Mexicans were defeated upon every battlefield, and we finally dictated to them the terms of a peace within their very capital, as it were, and "demanded" of them the surrender to us of New Mexico and California to recompense us for their degradation. These terms being acceded to, the war closed, and our victorious armies were withdrawn from Mexican soil.

But a day of reckoning to this nation was yet to come;

events were hastening ; but like the guests at Belshazzar's feast, we little heeded and less suspected the coming calamity.

The Mexican war and its consequent accumulation of territory to this nation, and the attempt which followed to make such new accumulation slave territory, aroused to a fearful degree and extent the emotions and passions of the people. They were sought to be appeased, and in a measure were so for a short period of time, by the memorable compromise act of 1850. But very soon the excitement broke out afresh. The slave holding states sought every opportunity to obtrude the slavery agitation upon the country. They seemed to take especial pleasure in insulting the moral sentiment of the North upon this question, and the repeated attempts to enforce in the free states the provisions of the fugitive slave law, as it was called, kept the whole country in a feverish state of excitement, and added fuel to the growing hostility to further slave aggrandizement.

These blundering acts of folly on their part, culminated at last, in the attempt that was made in 1853, to repeal so much of the act of 1820, which I have before alluded to, as dedicated to "freedom forever" all the territory acquired by our Louisiana purchase, which lay north of 36° and 30′.

The debate in Congress on this subject was of the most exciting character. It was of long duration. Every prominent man in Congress from the North took part in it. The press was aroused; and daily and weekly, the fervid utterances of such men as Seward and Sumner, of Ben Wade and Thomas Corwin, and a host of others, were spread before the people. Nor was the pulpit false to its trust. Religion and patriotism both combined to rouse the people and prevent if possible the consumma-

tion of the giant wrong. But the slave power was triumphant in the country. They had in their complete control every department of the Government, Executive, Legislative and Judicial. Franklin Pierce was President, Roger B. Taney was Chief Justice, and a large majority in both House and Senate were as docile and obedient to the requirements of the South, as were ever plantation slaves.

The repeal of the "Missouri compromise" was effected in May 1854. Not very long after this repeal came the famous Dred Scott decision, in the interest of slavery, rendered by Chief Justice Taney, and it was about this time also, in May 1856, that CHARLES SUMNER, the distinguished Republican Senator from Massachusetts, was stricken down by a Southern assassin, and left for dead upon the floor of the Senate.

From the time of the annexation of Texas in 1845, to the election of Mr. Buchanan as President of the United States over John C. Fremont in 1856, a period of eleven years, there had been a constant succession of triumphs on the side of the slave power in this country; outrage succeeded outrage, and every fresh aggression by the slaveholders was but the prelude to some new act of violence.

The repeal of the Missouri compromise was one of the first acts in the series of pro-slavery outrages which fell upon the free states like the clap of a thunder bolt, and aroused from its long reverie the slumbering conscience of the North. Almost immediately upon its repeal, came the struggle to determine, whether the great and fertile territory of Kansas should be bond or free. It was a great prize for either section to acquire; all the power of the government was openly enlisted upon the side of slavery, and slave holding emigration thither was en-

couraged to its utmost by all the partisans of human bondage in the southern states or elsewhere. The black stream was pouring in with fearful rapidity. The free states, seeing the danger, and fearing lest this black pall should overspread all the virgin soil of our newly acquired possessions, awoke fully to the magnitude of the occasion, and with all the ardor of knightly bravery entered the contest and valiantly contended for the prize.

How vivid in the memory of most of us are the barbarities of those border ruffians, whose mission it was to murder and to burn, and in any and every way to crush out free labor on those fertile and far western prairies! Even now it seems almost like a troubled dream. Many a peaceful, industrious northern emigrant to Kansas was coolly murdered. Many a free state habitation was burned over the heads of its inmates. The town of Lawrence, mainly settled by industrious emigrants from Massachusetts, was burned down by these ruffian marauders; rebuilt, and then burned down again. In the meantime repeated outrages of this character and those of a worse and more brutal nature, had most thoroughly aroused the people of the free states, and a settled determination had seized upon them to no longer endure such indignities, but to resist to the death the introduction of slavery into Kansas. They had seen thus far, what were its fruits, and resolving to no longer act upon the defensive, they as quietly determined to yield to no menace, but to resist force with force.

Kansas, during a three years unequal struggle, was baptized in blood. Many a retiring peaceful young man, whose nature was far enough from war and violence, left these eastern and northern states, to settle down to industrious pursuits, a life-long resident of Kansas, but who, through the stirring agencies of ruffian barbarities,

became crystalized into a hero of no ordinary mould. John Brown of Ossawatomie, he "whose soul," whether in victory or defeat from 1861 to, '65, was with our armies, "marching on," was educated to the puritan hero he became, by reason of the wrongs and barbarities he suffered, while a peaceful free state laborer upon the soil of Kansas. A man of truth, a man of honor, a christian hero after the best type of the New Testament, a man in whom there was no guile; Virginia had then no better use for a man possessing such qualities but to hang him. But how were the feelings, the convictions, the resolves of the people of the free states roused into activity and settled determination by this state murder under the forms of law! As a stroke of policy, no worse blunder, to call it by no milder name, has seldom if ever been committed by any state or nation.

The two distinguishing types of civilization before alluded to in this address, were now fast marshaling for a conflict for the mastery; whether it was to be a conflict by the peaceful ballot, or a deadly conflict of arms, human prophecy could not unveil; but that it was fast coming, every sign in the political horizon plainly demonstrated. How mysteriously God works! "He causeth the wrath of man to praise Him." How to eradicate human slavery from our country, and eliminate it entirely from our country's constitution, and those of the several states, was a question too vast and deep for the comprehension of our wisest statesmen. Its effects upon our system of government were fearful. It was a gangrene eating out the living tissues of national life. It was a naked, standing lie upon our very declaration of National Indepenence. Even the very framers of our national constitution were not insensible to or ignorant of its dangers, but they were powerless to avert it, or even to arrest its

growth. Washington feared lest it might be the cause and the occasion of sectional division, and he warned his countrymen of such danger in his farewell address. Jefferson deprecated its existence, and said in contemplating it, he "trembled for his country when he remembered that God was just."

That it should ever have been allowed a foothold in our constitution, was, by all christian statesmen, felt to be both a sin and sha ne which some time or other would have to be repented of by the nation. This sin at last ripened into violence and crime, and then sprang forth the opportunity; and who will say that the hand of the Almighty was not in it?

In the midst of all these stirring events in Kansas and in the country at large, in the year 1860 again occurred our quadrennial presidential election.

The question of slavery had so agitated the country that it became in a great measure a political contest for sectional supremacy. Happily, and as would seem, God had so willed it, the pro-slavery councils of the country were divided. The political campaign of that year, was fierce, bitter, unrelenting. The anti-slavery conscience of the country was aroused. The puritan element in the days of Milton exhibited to the world no more decided type of a "coolness of judgment and immutability of purpose," than did the friends of free Kansas, free soil, and free men, during that memorable political contest.

On the morning after the election, it was announced to the world that every northern state but one had cast its vote for the nominee of the Chicago convention, and that by a large majority of the electoral college, he would be declared president of the nation. From that day, through several successive years, years of alternate hope and fear, the great name of ABRAHAM LINCOLN became

the prominent and central figure in the galaxy of our nation's defenders.

That election was a memorable one in our political annals. For the first time in the history of the Republic, the free North had asserted its prerogative, and cast its influence and its vote upon the side of freedom. Its vast majorities for Mr. Lincoln indicated with unwavering certainty the earnestness and the strength of their convictions. The South had for many years been planting the seeds of violence; they had been traducing our peaceable northern people in the most opprobrious manner; they had hunted Wm. Lloyd Garrison through the streets of Baltimore; they had instigated mob violence in the streets of our northern cities; they had murderously shot Elijah P. Lovejoy for the crime of being an anti-slavery man, at the door of his own house at Alton, and by means of a southern oligarchy, and through the machinery of party, they had become the ruling political power of the nation.

For all these crimes and barbarities, a day of reckoning was yet to come.

No more indignities from slave holders, no more aggressions or insults from the slave power, was the prevailing sentiment in the free and indignantly awakened North. They were thoroughly in earnest now, and they were thereafter to take no steps backward. They knew their power and they felt it. The scenes in Kansas had taught peaceful northern people familiarity with the rifle and the revolver, and they were almost impatient for the fray.

Mr. Lincoln was inaugurated president of the nation March 4, 1861. On the 12th of April following, the telegraph clicked to every part of the nation, that southern hatred to the country and its flag was seeking its revenge,

and was then pouring forth iron hail from many a cannon into a peaceful American fort, erected by the American nation in the harbor of Charleston, for the protection of the city and the state against any foreign invasion. The bombardment continued into the next day, when the feeble garrison, being inadequate for such a contest, were obliged to lower the flag and surrender the fort.

This meant war. The "era of compromise and diplomacy" was now ended, and in their place was substituted in the hearts of every loyal citizen of the outraged North a settled and sullen determination to fight. And what an uprising was there in this free North as the news was heralded from city to city and from state to state. A million flags were unfurled to the sunshine and the breeze in a single day, as the nation's response to the indignity cast upon the national standard. Strong men's faces were pale, but not with fear; political party lines were obliterated; a common danger made us all for the time common friends; our country first and party afterwards, was the spontaneous outburst of every patriotic heart. We had never before realized how dear to us all was our country and our country's flag, that symbol of its unity and its power, until we saw that country humiliated and its ensign trailing in defeat.

President Lincoln's proclamation, sent forth to the world on the morning of the 15th of April 1861, calling upon the nation for seventy-five thousand men, was received with the utmost enthusiasm; and the response to it was as cheerful as it was prompt and patriotic.

How well we remember that chilly morning, early in the month of the following May, when our Woodstock Light Infantry with full ranks, under their captain, Washburn, left us to muster at Rutland, and go forth from thence with the first Vermont regiment to the seat of

war. Many there with moistened eyes and quivering lips, bade good bye to husbands, sons and brothers, to neighbors and friends, not knowing when or where they might meet again. They all felt that that was no holiday excursion, but a stern call of country to military duty, to sacrifice, and perhaps to death.

No one anticipated the duration of the contest, no one believed at first that we were entering upon a deathlike struggle of four years duration for the very existence of the government. No one could forecast the extent or magnitude of the rebellion or the vast amount of blood and treasure which its extinguishment would cost the nation. Where existed the imagination, in the early period of the war, wild enough to predict that ere it should close, over two millions and a half of enlisted able bodied men would be called into the national service? Who would have believed then that ere the war should end, our own state of Vermont, small in extent of territory, sparse in population, and wanting in many of the springs and resources tributary to wealth and local enterprise, would send forth from her own borders, as her quota to the national contribution, thirty-four thousand enlisted men to aid in the suppression of the wild, ferocious rebellion of the slave power?

Who thought in 1861, that within four years from that time *one hundred and eighty thousand* colored men would have been clothed in the national uniform, and been found fighting heroically under the national banner—the same banner which for so many years had been but the symbol of their own degradation? And who could have believed, nay, where was the imagination brilliant enough to conceive, that long ere the war should close, the shackles should dissolve from four millions of slaves, and at its

close they should take their position as freemen under the ensign of the Republic?

I have neither the time nor the inclination now to enter upon a recital of the many battles and sieges, the fierce conflicts on sea as well as on land, the animosities, and, on one side, too often, the barbarities, the outgrowth, as I trust and nothing more, of sectional hatred, for a limited period, the gradual, but sure advancement of the national armies, and the gradual extinguishment of the gigantic rebellion.

I take pleasure rather in recording the valor and the heroism of both armies, north as well as south; for are we not all countrymen of the same nation? And is not the same flag now waving over us all? Both armies were as brave as brave men ever are; and when they met in the shock of battle, it was Greek meeting Greek. It was no feeble encounter, and if I have read correctly the history of this great rebellion, each army found in the other a foeman worthy of his steel. And I record the evidence of every historian of the conflict, that braver men are nowhere to be found, than our own northern soldiers met, face to face, on many a field of mortal combat. Let Antietam, and Cedar Creek, Mission Ridge and Gettysburg, Pittsburg Landing and Spottsylvania, Vicksburg and the Wilderness, and many other a bloody field bear witness also.

It is estimated that the loss of life on the Union side was no less than *three hundred thousand* men, and that the losses on the side of the rebellion were equally great, making a total of *six hundred thousand*, saying nothing about the vast number of disabled men now left to us as mementoes of the terrible strife. What a national sacrifice as an atonement in part for a great national crime! In every southern state, lay the mouldering remains of

many a northern youth, who bravely died in defence of flag and country. In every northern grave yard, repose the wasted, maimed and mutilated victims of this terrible war. What suffering and anguish it brought to many a mourning family! How many happy households were made desolate by the announcement that the bright eyed youth, the father, son or brother would return no more forever. And last of all, the great crowning calamity, in the midst of victory and when joy reigned supreme in all loyal hearts, for the close of the war, and for a country saved, how was a whole nation flung into such paroxysms of grief and dismay, as were never before witnessed, when the loved and honored chief of the republic was stricken down by one of the nation's assassins! Was there ever before such a bereaved people? The minute guns, the tolling bells, the vast funeral processions, whole cities draped in mourning, a great nation in tears! From every pulpit was heard the voice of lamentation, and the great heart of the people was overcome with profound sorrow.

President Lincoln, with all his nobleness by nature, and his intellectual superiority, possessed also the tenderness of a woman and the simplicity of a child. In the midst of all the pressing cares of state, he writes the following graceful and touching letter to a widowed mother in the city of Boston:

"EXECUTIVE MANSION, WASHINGTON, Nov. 21, 1864.

"*Dear Madam*. I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the Adjutant General of Massachusetts, that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any words of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering to you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of

the Republic they died to save. I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.

" Yours very sincerely and respectfully,

" ABRAHAM LINCOLN."

" To Mrs. Bixby, Boston, Mass."

In April, 1865, our county emerged from this great war of Western civilization, victorious over all her enemies. The flag which fell at Fort Sumter had been restored over every fortress, every State; everywhere over all our broad land, more loved, more honored, more revered than ever before. Freedom's great mission in the hand of God had been accomplished. The Puritan type of civilization was in the ascendant, and the United States were now truly a Free Nation. Not a slave within her borders. The sacrifice had been great, but great also was the reward.

And now in this year of Centennial Jubilee, comes the nation's triumph in the arts of Peace. In that city where was first given to the world the immortal declaration of Freedom, have been erected vast edifices of strength and of beauty, wherein the nations of the world may each make exhibition of their superiority in the products of skilled labor and all useful arts and inventions. It is a sublime spectacle. The nations of the earth peaceably arrayed in friendly competition. It begins to look as though the long promised epoch was fast arriving when universal peace should prevail in the world, and the nations of the earth should learn war no more. And this is the outlook at the close of the first hundred years of our nation's existence.

If time would permit, it would be pleasant here to in-

dulge in a little pardonable pride in reviewing our country's growth and prosperity during its first century. How, from being a few feeble colonies in 1776, of barely three millions of people, fringed along on our Atlantic coast, for over a thousand miles, while westerly stretched the vast unknown region, then untrodden by the feet of man, we have become, as denominated by the *London Times*, one "great colossal Republic," extending from ocean to ocean, with a population of forty-four millions, all governed by the same laws, all protected by the same flag. How our commerce, expanding from mere nothing, now whitens every sea upon the globe. How in Agriculture, in Manufacturing and the Mechanic arts, in the three combined, we already lead the nations of the earth. How labor is everywhere protected and honored, and the laborer is the peer of every man in the land, however exalted. How the inventive genius of the country has achieved immortal triumphs in the production of so much labor saving machinery. How that electricity was brought into subjection by our Franklin. How the cotton gin was the invention of our Whitney. How the steam engine was first applied to locomotion by our Fulton. How that electro-magnetism was made subservient to man's use in the electric telegraph, by our Morse. How the American reaper and mowing machine have added to the profit as well as the ease of man's industry, and how the sewing machine has contributed more to the relief and comfort of our country women than any invention in all the ages of the past.

These are a portion of the nation's contributions to the nation's glory. They constitute in a measure some offset to the nation's shame—the crime of slavery, whose great barbarities we have been considering.

It seemed proper, on an occasion like this, to brief

allude to the more prominent political events, which have shaped our country's destiny during the first century of its existence. As a nation, we are no longer an experiment. We have had our days of trial and our days of hope; but from the first, our history has been one of national progress, unparalleled by that of any other nation. In agriculture, in manufacturing and the mechanic arts, in every department of material prosperity, the United States will favorably compare with any of the nations of the old world.

A word or two in conclusion. The great corner stone of our prosperity as a free people consists in a great measure in the freedom of Religious belief and the universal diffusion of Education and intelligence among the whole people. A free school and an open Bible is the shibboleth of our Freedom. It has been so in the past, it will continue to be so in the future. Let the people guard them well; let no sectarianism of religious belief enter our public schools. Let religion be taught in our churches and in the homes of our people. Let a useful, practical education be taught in all our schools. If necessary, let laws be enacted that shall compel the attendance of all our youth until a certain age upon our public schools, that all her citizens may be men of intelligence, and capable of choosing their own rulers; for where the people are self governing, there should prevail, for the protection of the state, a sound morality and universal intelligence.

If the American people shall well protect and cherish these safeguards of a free state, our country's duration shall be limitless, and generations yet unborn shall becomingly celebrate, all over this Western continent, future centennials of American Independence.

CENTENNIAL ORATION,

DELIVERED BEFORE

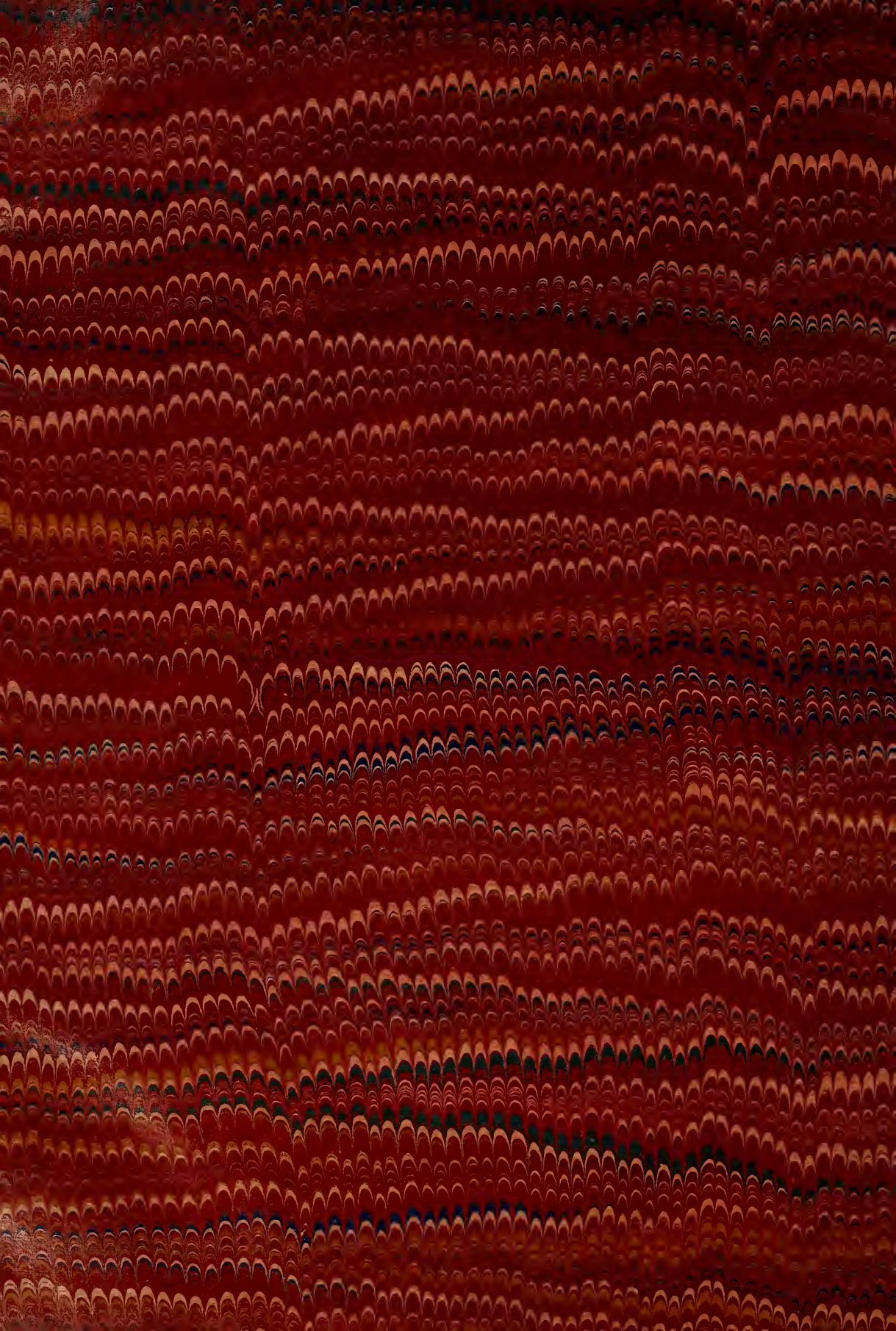
THE CITIZENS OF WOODSTOCK, VT., AND VICINITY,

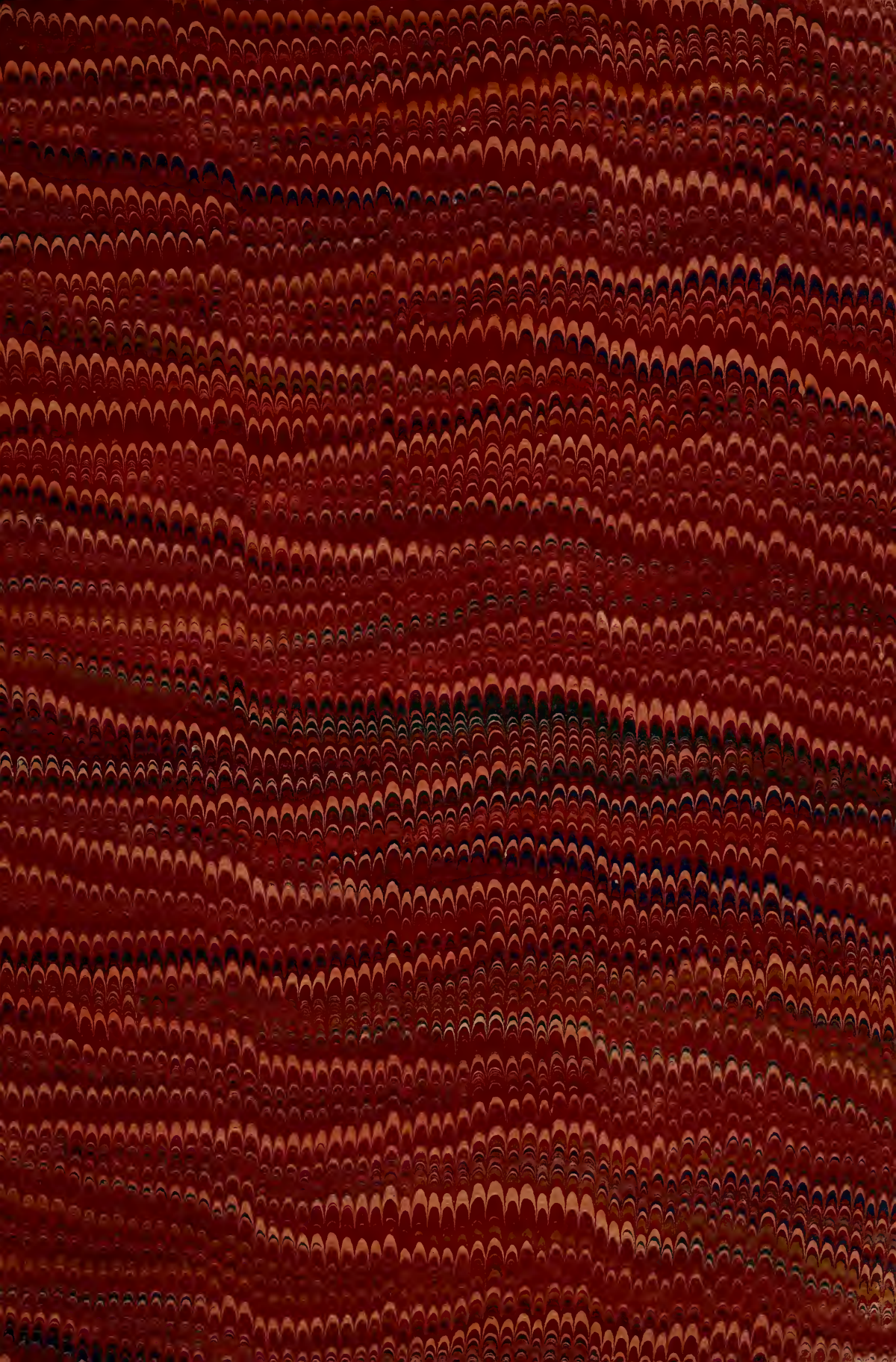
ON THE

FOURTH OF JULY, 1876.

By CHARLES P. MARSH.

Beach, Barnard & Co., Printers, 98 Randolph Street, Chicago, Ills.





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